

POSTAGE REFORM.

SPEECH

OF

HON. S. R. THURSTON, OF OREGON,

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THURSDAY, JAN. 16, 1851,

ON

THE POSTAGE REFORM.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the "bill to reduce and modify the rates of postage in the United States," Mr. POTTER, chairman of the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, offered the following amendment as an additional section to the bill:

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, There shall be charged upon all letters transported in the mails from any of the Atlantic ports in the United States to any of the ports of the United States upon the Pacific, or from any of the ports of the United States upon the Pacific to any of the Atlantic ports in the United States, which shall be transported through any foreign country, four times the usual rates; and upon all newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, magazines, books, or other printed matter herein provided for, three times the usual rates.

Mr. THURSTON moved (*pro forma*) to amend by inserting instead of "four times the usual rates," three cents; and said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I extremely regret that the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. POTTER] has deemed it his duty to bring this question before the committee again, and in this direct and formal manner. From the very first moment this bill was brought under discussion, till now, I have been every moment in my seat, and watched with anxious solicitude the temper and feeling of members upon the direct and specific question which now, for the first time during the progress of the bill, is to be passed upon as a sole issue, disconnected with any and all other questions. It is now to stand or fall upon its merits, this committee being judge.

At a very early stage of the discussion of this bill, I found, as I then thought, a very perceptible, and, to me, a very alarming inclination to the idea, that we on the Pacific, as had been urged by the Postmaster General, and foreshadowed by the distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, in his substitute to this bill, ought to be taxed very much higher for all our mailable matter, going by way of the Isthmus, than was proposed on matter carried any distance inland. I therefore deemed it a solemn duty I owed to my constituents, on the second day of the discussion of the bill, to call the attention of

the House to this matter, and, if possible, to awaken in the minds of members such a train of reflection as would lead them to see not only its impolicy, but the flagrant injustice such a course would operate upon my constituents. This I did, as I said before, on the second day of the discussion of this bill, and from that very day I became sanguine that the judgment of the House would be right upon the matter, and that its decision would place us in a position from which the amendment of the gentleman [Mr. POTTER] seeks to wrest it. On that occasion I announced our willingness to come in under a scale of graduations which would operate upon all within the different grades alike, though, from our peculiar condition, nearly all our correspondence being covered by the largest scale, and consequently the highest rate of postage, it would press upon us with a heavy hand, and wring from us with an unrelenting grasp more money than we ought to be called upon to pay. On day before yesterday the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. PARKER] offered an amendment to this bill, proposing to establish a scale of three grades—of three, five, and ten cents prepaid, and double that sum in each case if not prepaid. I also deemed that a fitting occasion again to formally call the attention of the House to the matter, giving my reasons why the amendment should not prevail. The amendment was rejected by a very decisive vote. Another proposition more favorable to our coast, but yet proposing the scale of graduations, was subsequently voted down, and the committee, having gone over the whole bill, have decided at last in favor of uniformity of postage, and against the graduated principle. We on the Pacific, as the rest of the country to which we belong, are provided for in this bill as it now stands, and the measure is one of uniformity, contemplating that a whole nation, many in one, may partake, in common, of its rich fruits, which I trust ere long will be ripe for the harvest; and I, sir, as an American citizen, but a moment ago contemplating the grandeur and blessings of our system of government, felt my heart enlarge and grow warm within me at the thought that our laws, like the sun

from heaven, shed their heavenly influence within their sphere everywhere and equally upon all. But in the very enjoyment of that pleasant reverie this amendment came like a spectre, to frighten me, and, like the destroying angel of night, to pick me and my people out, not for mercy, but for destruction! It being so, the committee must bear with me while I labor to arrest the evil which now impends over the people I represent.

The reasons assigned by the advocates of higher postage on all mailable matter going to or coming from the Pacific by way of the Isthmus, are, 1st. The cost of transportation across the Isthmus; 2d. The expense of maintaining the lines from New York to Chagres and from Panama to Oregon; 3d. The great distance the mailable matter has to be carried; and, 4th. That unless the postage is higher on matter by that route, the proceeds of revenue will not pay the expense of the route. These reasons, I believe, cover the whole ground, and form, when amplified, the argument in support of the new section proposed by the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. POTTER.] None of these reasons I hold to be good, and if I am able to make it so appear, I shall expect to receive, as I desire to receive, the rejection of the amendment by the judgment and vote of the committee.

The first reason assigned is the expense of transportation across the Isthmus. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. POTTER] says that he has a list of expense of transportation of mails across the Isthmus, paid to the Government of New Granada, which amounts to \$5,050, and that every pound of mailable matter transported over the Isthmus costs our Government twenty-one cents and seventy-one hundredths of a cent. But he did not say, at the same time, either the amount of revenue accruing on that matter which had cost our Government \$5,050 to transport over the Isthmus, nor the amount of mailable matter—particularly of letters—with its accruing revenue, per hundred pounds. I hold in my hand, sir, an official statement from J. W. Farrelly, Esq., Auditor of the Post Office Department, a very significant statement, too, on this head. It reads as follows:

Postages which have accrued on the New York and Chagres lines from December 1, 1848 to September 3, 1850.

From December 1, 1848, to September 3, 1850:

Mails sent.....	\$223,890 96	
Mails received.....	178,699 67	
		\$402,590 63
Prepaid.....	69,749 04	
Unpaid.....	332,841 59	
		402,590 63

Or as follows:

From Dec. 1, 1848, to June 30, 1849:

Mails received.....	6,727 89	
Mails sent.....	16,907 14	
		23,635 03
Prepaid.....	5,243 39	
Unpaid.....	18,391 64	
		23,635 03

From July 1, 1849, to June 30, 1850:

Mails received.....	109,263 26	
Mails sent.....	140,005 64	
		249,268 90
Prepaid.....	37,083 05	
Unpaid.....	212,185 85	
		249,268 90

From July 1, 1850, to Sept. 30, 1850:

Mails received.....	54,630 57	
Mails sent.....	75,056 13	
		129,686 70
Prepaid.....	41,650 14	
Unpaid.....	88,036 56	
		129,686 70

By this it will be seen that in one year and nine months, the accrued postage on this route amounted to \$402,590 63. If from this sum you deduct the expenses of transportation across the Isthmus, you will have left \$397,540 63 as the net revenue on that mailable matter which had cost \$5,050 for transportation over the Isthmus. And while on this exhibit, it may be profitable to notice the rapid increase of business on this line since it went into operation, for the purpose, among other things, of showing what it will do hereafter. From December 1, 1848, to June 20, 1849—over six months and a half—the accrued postage amounted to less than \$24,000. For the year next succeeding June, 1849, the accrued postage amounted to nearly \$250,000. By this it will be seen, that proportionately, there was over five times the amount of mail business done on this route the second year that there was the first. But, during the next three months subsequent to June 30, 1850, the accrued postage amounted to \$129,686 70. And I see by a statement lately made in the New York Herald, taken, of course, from the books of the New York post office, that, for the quarter ending on the 31st December, 1850, there were sent from the New York post office alone to the Pacific 127,048 letters, and received at the same office from the Pacific, 123,919 letters. The postage on these alone, at present rates, would amount to \$100,386 80. This includes none of the papers, and other mailable matter, nor does it include any part of the mailable matter sent from, or received at, the post office in Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, or New Orleans, Louisiana. Reckoning the whole postage on matter received at and sent from all four of these offices, for the quarter stated above, and I question whether it would fall much short of a quarter of a million of dollars. But supposing the next nine months subsequent to September, 1850, should witness no increase on the business of the three preceding months, the accruing postage on this line, or route, for the year ending June 30, 1851, would amount to \$518,746 80. There is more probability that it would reach a million. These facts and calculations set forth, in a strong light, the rapid increase of business on this route, and they prove satisfactorily to the reflecting mind, that of all mail routes in the United States, this is to become the most gigantic, and will continue so till the great national road shall span the Republic inland. And if you reduce the rates to three cents, but a few years will elapse before the revenue of the route will, in my judgment, pay the whole expense of keeping it in operation.

But now as to the amount of mailable matter per hundred pounds, each pound of which is said to cost the Government over twenty-one cents for transportation. I find upon experiment that it takes at least thirty-five single letters in envelopes to weigh a pound, or eighteen large newspapers. On an average, I think it would take at least twenty newspapers to the pound; one hundred pounds, therefore would contain thirty-five hundred letters, or two thousand newspapers. At the present rate, the postage on these letters would amount to \$1,400, and on these papers, if transient, to \$60. Deduct from these several sums the cost of transportation, and you have the net postage. But reckoning the postage on these letters and papers as proposed to be established by this

amendment, and the postage on each hundred weight of letters would be \$420, and on each hundred weight of papers, estimated as above, \$60. Every family upon the Pacific may desire to take one or more newspapers from the Atlantic; but if they should take but one apiece, this amendment will take from them for each paper, \$1 56 cents per annum. Reckoning one hundred thousand families on the Pacific—a number which a few years will witness—this amendment would take from that coast for postage on newspapers alone, providing that number of papers is taken, which is by no means improbable, \$156,000 per annum. On the supposition I make, even if the bill pass in its present shape, it would take \$52,000 per annum. Should this amendment be rejected, and the bill pass as it is, the amount of postage on one hundred pounds of letters would be \$105, and on one hundred pounds of papers \$20. In this case, admitting the gentleman's statement as to the cost of transportation to be true, the cost of transportation of newspapers would exceed the postage by only \$1 71 cents per hundred pounds, but the postage on letters would exceed the expense of transportation by \$83 29 cents per hundred pounds; and one cannot fail to see that, reduce the rates of postage even as low as now provided for in the bill, its operation will be to draw away our currency, and produce a pressure in our money market; for every cent which is paid by us in this way, except the pittance to postmasters, will be with drawn from our midst, to circulate in the Atlantic States. Were our coast contiguous to this by a connected chain of States and commerce from hand to hand, this money might in part return through the channels of ordinary circulation; but now, when it is paid by us, it goes, never, or if ever, but slowly, to return. Hence, a very essential reason with me, in struggling for this low postage, is, to contract to the minimum rate this drain on our specie, for the purpose of guarding, as much as possible, against those revulsions arising from a country being drained of money, which I foresee may some day visit us on the Pacific. When it does come, as come it will, if not prevented in time, it will be one of those earthquake-convulsions which will shake down as sand hills the strongest monuments of trade.

Suppose this to be the case on newspapers, that the cost of transportation exceeds slightly the amount of postage chargeable on them, it would then be no more than right for the Government to meet this very trifling expense for the purpose of aiding a new country, and scattering light and information among the pioneers of that coast. It may well be said to be a deed due from the parent to the children; and certainly no one will say the Government ought, for a moment, to think of raising a revenue on the intellectual food of her colonies.

But I am not willing to admit the correctness of the statement of the gentleman as to the expense of transportation. He did not tell us, specifically, how it accrued, but left us to infer it accrued by virtue of a treaty stipulation with New Granada. Suppose our Government did make a foolish treaty, as, in my opinion, she surely did, when she made that treaty, even if construed as favorably as possible in our favor, that does not make it right for her to make herself whole at the expense of a very small portion of her people. That

doctrine will never do. If you have been taken in, do not strive to wring from us money enough to supply the deficit. Look out sharper next time. But I said, sir, that I do not accede to the correctness of the gentleman's statement as to the cost of transportation.

The treaty with the Government of New Granada, concerning this and other matters, was concluded and signed at Bogata, in that Government, on the 6th of March, 1844, and ratified at that place on the 20th of December, 1844, to continue in force for eight years from the date of ratification, and from the expiration of that time, for subsequent terms of four years each, "until one of the two Governments shall give the other six months' notice of its wish that the same shall terminate." That part of it pertaining to the subject now under consideration is contained in the first article, and is in these words:

"The packet vessels of war "Los buques de guerra of the Republic of the United States will disembark at Chagres or Porto-bello the sealed bag or packet which may contain the letters and newspapers, destined to cross the Isthmus of Panama, which said bag or packet shall be delivered to the postmaster of one or the other of these places, by whom it shall be forwarded to Panama, for the consideration of thirty dollars for each trip—provided the weight of the bag or packet should not exceed one hundred pounds, and in the proportion of twelve dollars more for each additional hundred pounds; the said sum shall be paid in advance, and no excess should be allowed." "Los correos de la Republica de los Estados Unidos desembarcarán en Chagres ó en Porto-bello la balija ó paquete cerrado que contenga las correspondencias é impresos destinados á atravesar el Istmo de Panamá; la cual balija ó paquete será á entrega al respectivo Administrador de correos y dirigida por el a Panamá, mediante la indemnizacion de treinta peso fuertes por cada viaje, siempre que el peso de la balija ó paquete no excediere de cien libras, y en la proporcion de doce pesos fuertes mas por cada cien libras de exceso, que se pagaran anticipadamente, cuando el exceso del peso no llegare a cien libras."

It is seen by this that our Government is to pay to New Granada \$30 for the first hundred weight, and \$12 for each subsequent hundred weight, taken across at the same trip, or rather landed by a mail steamer at the same time. *Prima facie*, therefore, the gentleman is evidently wrong.

I am aware, and I will do him the justice to say it, that there has been, and now exists, some difficulty between the two Governments, growing out of an evident want of good faith, as I think, on the part of the Government of New Granada, and her desire to pilfer, if she can, without being rebuked. In the first place, she contends that she ought not to allow our Government but eighty cents for a dollar, reckoning our dollar to be worth only eight New Granadian rials, or eighty cents. Our translation of that treaty evidently shows how our Government construed it; and that is, that we were to pay thirty American dollars for the first hundred, and twelve for each additional hundred landed by a mail steamer at the same time. I find, upon consulting the books, that "*peso fuerte*" means a *hard dollar*, and that "*peso sencillo*" means a *current dollar*. Yet the Government of New Granada contends, I am informed, that our dollar is worth only eighty cents, or is current for only that sum. But if current dollars had been meant by the treaty, the appropriate language would have been used. But I shall not undertake here to discuss the precise meaning of the treaty, or of the words in question, though I believe our Government contends that the American dollar should be taken for ten rials, or one hundred cents. But

even if we yield this pretension of the Government of New Grenada, the \$30 would only be raised to \$37 50, and the \$12 to \$15, so that, *prima facie*, the gentleman would be incorrect in this case also.

There is one other point of dispute, which arises in this way: The Government of New Granada calls each bag, however small, one hundred pounds, and reckons it at 300 rials; and if the bag weighs one hundred and one pounds, they reckon thirty of their dollars, or 300 rials, for the one hundred pounds, and twelve of their dollars or 120 rials for the one pound; which may be illustrated in this way:

1 bag of	30 pounds		300 rials.
1	" 101	"	420 "
1	" 1	"	300 "
1	" 75	"	300 "
1	" 7	"	300 "
1	" 150	"	420 "
6	364		2,040 "

Now, the government of New Granada has the impudence and bad faith to pretend to claim 2,040 rials, or 255 of our dollars, for transporting three hundred and sixty pounds across the Isthmus. But neither this mode of reckoning the weight, or, I believe, of estimating the value of the dollar, is acceded to by our Government, the mode of reckoning weight being unequivocally denied; but, in the language of an officer of the Post Office Department, "agreeably to an understanding between the Consul at Panama and the Panama (New Granadian) authorities, the Consul pays 3 rials for the first hundred pounds, and 120 rials for each succeeding hundred pounds or fraction thereof; for three hundred pounds, which would amount to 660 rials, and for three hundred and sixty-four pounds, and for the remaining 1,380 rials, to be adjusted hereafter betwixt the two Governments." This is not even a plausible pretence for reckoning the weight in this way, and therefore I presume our Government will pay, and pay only, \$30 (American) for the first hundred, and \$12 (American) for each subsequent hundred, or fractional part of a hundred pounds, by actually exacting the weight of all the bags in a lump. Now, reckoning each one hundred pounds at \$12, you raise in the shape of postages on every one hundred pounds of letters, at the rates now in the bill, after paying the transportation, \$93, and on each one hundred pounds of papers \$8; and should we grant the pretension urged by New Granada, and admit that "*treinta peso fuertes*" does mean \$30 current in New Granada, that our dollar is worth but eighty cents, or eight rials, then the revenue on papers would exceed the expenses of transportation by five dollars per hundred pounds. Moreover, the treaty has now less than two years to run, at the end of which time, if the proper notice is given, as it most assuredly should be given, a treaty vastly more favorable can be made, or an arrangement with the Panama Railroad Company, by which our Government will not have to expend one half the money it now does to procure its mail transportation. This will be the case, unless Great Britain is allowed, as she has been allowed, with shame be it said, for the last two years, to control matters in Central America. Hence, the present rates of expense for transportation across the Isthmus will soon be reduced. From this view of the case, I

think I am authorized to say, that the argument in favor of the amendment, based on the cost of transportation across the Isthmus, falls to the ground, and is not entitled to weight.

The next argument presented, is the expense of maintaining the line from New York to Chagres, and from Panama to Oregon. I am willing to admit that the expense of these lines is very large, it being \$290,000 for the line from New York to Chagres, and \$199,000 from Panama to Oregon, or \$489,000 for the whole route. But on another occasion, I called the attention of the House to the manifest impropriety of considering these lines as established, or now maintained, exclusively for our benefit on the Pacific coast, and to the consequent injustice of taxing our correspondence, with a view to meet the sum total of the expense. I then showed that these lines, aside from communicating with the whole southern line of our possessions on the Atlantic, communicated directly with the possessions of four foreign nations, and indirectly with one half of the business world. Hence, the injustice of making the correspondence with your weak, and, as yet, small population on the Pacific, pay the expense of this gigantic mail line, which bears your glory and your commerce to half the globe, and causes your name to be revered by the nations of the earth, is too palpable to admit of doubt.

But admitting that this line is maintained solely for our benefit, and that the nation derives no advantage from it but that growing out of a communication with her possessions on the Pacific; then, upon a just consideration, the argument wholly fails to substantiate the point for which it is intended. To tax us, or to tax our correspondence to an extent sufficient to meet this expense, would be a total violation of the long-established policy of the Government, a departure from its present usage, and an invidious discrimination against us, nowhere, and at no time, practiced on this side against a single State or Territory of the Union. I refer to the fact, that there are numerous routes in the United States, whose expense is not met by the postage on the mail matter carried over them; and that there are numerous States, the proceeds of whose postal revenue does not pay the expense of their mail routes.

I have applied to the Department for a statement of the number of routes, and what routes do not pay themselves, but the information could not be had without much labor. It is safe to say, however, that the number of routes, out of the six or seven thousand in the United States, amounts to several hundred, and may reach more than a thousand.

This state of things was foreseen at an early day; and as long ago as March 3d, 1825, it was provided for by law in these words:

"That all post routes which hereafter, within the term of three successive years, fail to yield *one fourth* of the expense incident to its establishment, shall be discontinued by the Postmaster General, unless in cases where it may be necessary as a connection or continuance of a route or routes: *Provided, also*, That this section shall not be so construed as to deprive the seat of justice in each county of one mail going to and from said town."

And this provision has continued in force from that time to the present, and is now in force. It proves that the Government has not heretofore, and that it does not even now, act upon the principle, that every mail route shall sustain itself. And if we extend our inquiry, we shall further see

that the Government has not gone on the principle, that each State or Territory shall pay, in postage revenue, what is expended for carrying the mails within its borders. The following exhibit will show what I mean:

Statement of the net revenue arising from letter postages, newspapers, &c., and the amount credited contractors for the transportation of the mails in the several States and Territories, for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1850.

States and Territories.	Revenue.	Transportation.
Maine.....	\$79,978 29	\$42,087 27
New Hampshire.....	55,684 11	27,329 13
Vermont.....	52,491 26	42,507 83
Massachusetts.....	316,490 71	117,388 93
Rhode Island.....	36,010 77	12,212 40
Connecticut.....	95,989 99	55,048 00
New York.....	786,532 40	297,226 29
New Jersey.....	58,214 40	56,921 95
Pennsylvania.....	366,351 78	144,672 57
Delaware.....	11,811 49	8,577 00
Maryland.....	108,056 25	133,598 81
District of Columbia.....	12,508 10	
Virginia.....	124,740 85	165,462 81
North Carolina.....	41,160 81	151,539 11
South Carolina.....	65,107 39	110,981 19
Georgia.....	90,280 22	142,432 32
Florida.....	13,264 13	29,246 04
Ohio.....	250,410 62	134,984 96
Michigan.....	47,686 35	63,148 69
Indiana.....	71,726 57	55,901 96
Illinois.....	86,434 28	109,054 49
Wisconsin.....	49,756 88	24,243 90
Iowa.....	18,369 15	16,088 96
Missouri.....	68,697 91	49,411 82
Kentucky.....	71,785 54	68,508 42
Tennessee.....	53,823 66	62,054 80
Alabama.....	63,444 50	146,641 44
Mississippi.....	48,720 55	71,205 86
Arkansas.....	13,179 83	49,745 21
Louisiana.....	101,226 86	40,750 36
Texas.....	21,636 05	65,579 57
Oregon.....	654 68	
California.....	91,379 89	
Minnesota.....	902 05	

Total for the year...\$3,374,508 32 \$2,494,552 09

It will be seen by this, that while there are a large number of States paying more revenue in postage than the expense of transportation on the several routes within them, there are also a large number whose expense of transportation exceeds their revenue. Throwing off the odd dollars and cents, it will be perceived, from this exhibit, that the receipts from postage in Maine exceed the cost of transportation.....\$37,000

New Hampshire.....	28,000
Vermont.....	10,000
Massachusetts.....	199,000
Rhode Island.....	24,000
Connecticut.....	40,000
New York.....	489,000
New Jersey, about.....	2,000
Pennsylvania.....	222,000
Delaware.....	3,000
Ohio.....	116,000
Indiana.....	16,000
Wisconsin.....	25,000
Iowa.....	2,000
Missouri.....	19,000
Kentucky.....	3,000
Louisiana.....	61,000

While in Maryland the expense of transportation exceeds the revenue.....\$25,000

Virginia.....	41,000
North Carolina.....	110,000
South Carolina.....	45,000
Georgia.....	52,000
Florida.....	16,000

Michigan.....	16,000
Illinois.....	23,000
Tennessee.....	9,000
Alabama.....	83,000
Mississippi.....	23,000
Arkansas.....	36,000
Texas.....	44,000

Setting aside California, the Territories, and this District, there are, of the thirty remaining States, seventeen whose revenue exceeds the cost of transportation, while there are thirteen whose cost of transportation exceeds their revenue; and this principle has been acted upon from the organization of this Government till now. It is a principle growing out of the genius of our union of States, each giving and receiving in some things less and some more; but upon the whole in such a measure, it is contemplated, as to make the reciprocity equal. It appears, then, from these facts, that it never has been the policy of the Government that every mail route shall pay its expenses, or that the postage revenue of every State shall equal the expense of transporting the mail either to it, or within it, much less both together. For the Government to do it, or seek to do it in this case, would be *unusual*, and, on the ground everywhere recognized, that its blessings should fall alike upon all its citizens, it follows, of course, that it would be unjust. This position, therefore, in the argument in favor of the section proposed, that it is called for, and hence justified, on the score of expense of transportation, turns out to be absolutely wrong, even in theory, and more conclusively so when considered in relation to the practice of the Government. Being thus wrong, it must be set aside as of no weight to guide your votes, gentlemen, of the Convention, on the proposition now pending.

But *set aside* from the consideration we have just concluded, there are other important reasons why our correspondence should not be taxed to pay the entire expense of these lines. One of them has been partially glanced at, that both lines are only semi-domestic, both being semi-foreign. Now, we have other ocean steam lines communicating with foreign nations. The postage on mailable matter of none of them meets the expense of mail pay. Yet it is not proposed to tax letters, &c., on these routes high enough to do this; and why? Simply because the *benefit* of the mail is not the only benefit derived from the lines—a part of their object being to promote and enlarge our commerce. Precisely the same thing exists in the case of these two lines, and for precisely the same reasons, among others before and hereafter named, the postage on these routes should not be taken out of the usual course.

But in the States this side the mountains, there is a continuity of States and people; and there are great mail tracks running through one State, and connected with similar ones in another State, and so on through the whole thirty. Some sections of these tracks may not pay, while others more than pay—the deficit in one case being made up by the surplus in the other. But, in the case of these two lines, there is a grand route between the extremes of the Union. The great proportion of its intermediate length is out of the country, with nothing like intermediate States to pay their proportion of the expense. Hence, this is the very best reason in the world, even if it were the practice of the Government to require each route to

pay its expense, for taking this route out of the operations of the general rule. It is not fair to say, as some gentlemen do, that because people this side of the mountains have to pay the same postage as we on that, on mailable matter carried over this route, that therefore it operates on both sections of the country alike. Whatever operates as an embarrassment to correspondence on this route, operates almost exclusively against us on that side, because we are dependent on you, and not you on us. We are to derive almost the exclusive benefit from the correspondence; and if you have to pay high postage you will not write, for the reason that your letter will produce a return, and a consequent draft on your own purse. So it will be with us—the money in both cases being taken from our coast, and brought to this. I cannot contemplate it, sir, without alarm. This is to us a question of bread, not cereal, but intellectual bread; and in God's name, do not take it from us, while we are yet weak and need nourishment and strength. Now, if ever, is your time to be liberal. Throw over this cord of intercommunication, and fasten it on the Pacific, a ligament which no sudden convulsion can snap, nor the corroding tooth of time gnaw or weaken; but which, with the lapse of years, will grow larger and stronger, contracting and drawing us together into one common brotherhood, the united people of a great and united nation. Let this artery of thought and social life, fastened here in your own hearts, be fastened there, in the hearts of your Pacific brethren; and let there be no unnatural obstructions to its healthy and free pulsations; transmitting the element of life and health from the centre to the extreme parts of this great world, and we shall maintain the Union. Let this be said, and neither faction, nor fanatic, nor circle of selfishness, nor things high, nor things low, shall ever shake the harmony of the Republic east and west. I could keep on enumerating many valid objections against the reason now under consideration for the adoption of this proposition, but plenty has been said, as I think, to substantiate it; so we will pass to the third, which is:

The great distance of the mailable letter has to be carried. This would have been a capital reason in favor of adopting a scale of postage, but at this stage of the bill it has lost its force, if it ever had any. Your own decision in favor of a uniform postage, in all other cases, without regard to distance, has overthrown the argument founded on distance; for you cannot lead distance in one case and disregard it in all others, unless you can show a special reason for the exception. The two special reasons—the expense of transportation across the Isthmus, and the expense of the line, have both failed. You now propose, as the bill stands, and as it will undoubtedly pass the House, to carry letters from Houlton, in Maine, to Santa Fé, in New Mexico, or Salt Lake city, in Utah, or from Galveston, in Texas, to St. Paul, in Minnesota, for three cents each, and papers for one cent. Here are distances of three or four thousand miles, covered by numerous and expensive routes; yet neither the one nor the other is taken into the account. It certainly costs vastly more to carry a letter three thousand miles than two, yet you charge the same. We have a right to insist that the Government shall adhere to her policy of bestowing her blessings alike on all. If she has

varied at all from this course, it has been in favor of the new and weak portions of the country for special reasons—never as against them and in favor of the stronger, and especially without urgent reasons. Some gentlemen say this is such an extreme case, as to distance, that it may be justified, and is called for. What is the distance from New York to Astoria, Oregon? Not seven thousand miles. Here, in the cis-montane States, it is proposed to charge the same for ten miles as for three thousand; and is not the discrepancy greater between ten miles, or even one, and three thousand than between three thousand and seven thousand, or three and seven? Yet, sir, the decision of the committee, as now exhibited in the bill, makes this startling reply to such an argument. Turn the matter over as you please, yet bearing in mind that you have determined on uniformity in all other cases, your argument in favor of imposing upon your trans-montane States and Territories, a higher postage, based on distance, dwindles down to an absurdity, and holds the same rank as the two which I have previously considered.

The last point to be considered is the argument, that unless the postage is higher on mailable matter by the Isthmus route than on any other route in the United States, the revenues arising from postage will not meet the expense of the route. That part of this position based on the idea that our correspondence should be taxed high enough to pay the expense of the route, has been answered already. The other part resolves itself into this, that the revenue arising from postage on this route at three cents per letter, will not be so large as it would at twelve cents, and hence, that twelve instead of three should be adopted. This position I propose now to consider.

The following table will show the operations of the Post Office Department for ten years, from 1839 to 1849 inclusive:

Years.	Post office's	Post roads.	Receipts.	Expenses.	Letters.
		Miles.			
1839.....	12,680	133,999	\$4,477,619	\$4,654,718	
1840.....	13,468	155,639	4,530,265	4,759,110	27,535,554
1841.....	13,682	155,026	4,379,317	4,567,228	
1842.....	13,733	149,732	4,546,246	4,627,716	
1843.....	13,814	142,295	4,295,925	4,374,713	24,267,552
1844.....	14,103	144,687	4,237,285	4,320,731	
1845.....	14,183	143,844	4,289,841	4,320,731	
1846.....	14,601	147,679	3,487,199	4,084,296	
1847.....	15,146	153,818	3,945,893	3,971,310	52,173,480
1848.....	16,159	163,208	4,371,077	4,326,850	58,069,075
1849.....	16,747	167,703	4,705,176	4,479,049	62,000,000

And while commenting upon this exhibit, the distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, makes the following forcible observations:

"It is seen by this table that under the old high rates of postage in 1840, the number of letters sent through the United States Post Office was 27,535,554—receipts \$4,530,265; and there was a constant diminution of letters and receipts from postages, down to 1843, when the number of letters had run down to 24,267,552—revenue, \$4,295,225; leaving, in 1843, an actual deficit in the Department of \$78,788; and even then, as now, we found the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. Brown] opposed to any change; using the same argument then as now, that the Department would be bankrupted by the proposed reduction. The gentleman says he has been disappointed in the result. I am sure, if he lives, and the present proposed reduction takes place, he will be again disappointed. I was a member of this House in 1845, when the reduction was made, and voted for it. That gentleman voted against it. We have both been dis-

appointed. The effect upon the revenue has been more salutary than any of us anticipated.

"Before this reduction in 1845, the old rates were twenty-five cents on the single letter for the longest distance, and six and a quarter cents for the shortest. We changed it to ten and five; and under the operation of the reduction the number of letters increased from 24,267,552 in 1843, so that in 1849 there were transported over 62,000,000, and the revenue in the same period had increased from \$4,295,925 to \$4,705,176, and in 1850 to \$5,552,971."

If I can see anything, these remarks of the gentleman who now proposes this section, form a conclusive argument, when carried out, against his proposition. The very train of thought which his remarks awaken exposes to full view the fallacy of the position I am now considering, to wit: that a twelve-cents postage on our correspondence will produce more than one of three. The gentleman refers to the old rates of postage, existing previous to the modification in 1845—the largest rate being twenty-five, and the smallest six and a quarter cents, while there were two intermediate rates, eighteen and three quarters and twelve and a half cents. What reason does the gentleman assign why "there was a constant diminution of letters and receipts from postage down to 1843, when the number of letters had run down to 24,267,552," and this, too, while our population and business were increasing? The whole tendency and aim of his argument has been to show that this diminution of matter transmitted through the mail, and a consequent diminution of revenue, arose from the then high rates of postage. Admit the argument, and then what reason does he give why the mail matter and revenue increased after the reduction of 1845? Of course he could mean no other than that it arose by reason of the reduced rates of postage. Reckoning on the principle of the extremes of the rates under the law previous to the year 1845, and that which the law adopted in that year, you will see they compare as thirty-one and a quarter to fifteen, or nearly as two to one, being reduced over one half by the law of 1845. But you will perceive, also, that the letters sent through the mail in 1849 are almost three times as large as in 1843, while the expense of transportation in 1849 only exceeds that of 1843 by \$104,336. Now, this increase of mailable matter evidently arose in part from the reduction of postage in 1845, and in part from the increase of population and business since that time, while the slight difference in the cost of transportation, &c., between the years 1843 and 1849 arose from the diminishing expense of transportation growing out of the rapidly-improving state of our roads and conveyances. This must be evident, for our post offices have increased from 13,814, in 1843, to over 19,000 at the present time, while our post roads have been increased from 142,295 miles in 1843 to 167,703 in 1849, and the latter sum has been very materially increased during the past year. Such has been the effect, if not consequent upon the reduction of postage in 1845, certainly subsequent to it. Whatever may have been the cause, whether one or all the causes I have enumerated, it is argued, and I think justly, that a similar result will follow the reduction from ten and five as extremes to three. The sum of the two extremes in the other case, that is, the extremes before the reduction in 1845 and the extremes after that reduction, compared as two to one nearly; in this case as five to one. If the result shall correspond, I shall be glad of it. This is contended for,

and this is assigned why this new reduction should be made. I desire to take the advocates of this theory at their word, and I mean to insist that they shall stand by their theory, which is, that the lower rates will produce more revenue than the higher. This being true, (and they are estopped from denying,) this amendment is presented in the face and eyes of their own theory, and, unless they can show cause for taking this route out of the operations of the general rule, the gentleman who offers the amendment, and the gentlemen who vote for it, provided they are converts to the theory which has governed the committee while considering this bill, are presented in the awkward position of seeking to consummate a measure which, by their own theory, would be ruin on the revenue which they profess to seek to protect. And the only question remaining to consider is, Is there any special reason for the exception?

I have heard none, except what I have considered, and this additional one, that high postage in this case would not have the usual effect, because it is said we on the Pacific shall correspond with our friends this side of the mountains anyhow! If you seek to justify your course upon our necessities—if you propose to profit by our misfortunes, and to tax us because, from our very position, we *must* and *will* pay it—let it be openly avowed, and we will make our appeal to a magnanimous people for redress. I need only to mention such an idea, to draw down upon it the consuming fire of an indignant and just people. But, if you deny this to be the reason—which any man should blush to own—what reason *can* be assigned? I have heard none, and I am bold to say none can be given upon which an American statesman, who believes in the theory alluded to, would dare to risk his reputation.

But, Mr. Chairman, it is not true that we would correspond as freely with twelve cents postage on letters as we should with only three cents, nor that we should take papers as freely at three cents postage on each as we should with but one. If it is meant, that by reason of our great distance from our friends, and having no other means of intercommunication than by this line, that therefore we should correspond, without regard to postage, I reply, that the same reason would apply to all other correspondence which is carried on over long distances. The emigrants leave the old States and move to the new ones, or Territories, leaving their friends behind. The mail is their usual, and may be their only means, in most cases, to be their only means of communicating with them freely. Why does not this same rule apply? Why would not the man in Iowa, or Minnesota, or New Mexico, or Utah, under the embargo of high postage, be as likely to correspond *any how* with his friends in Maine, as would the man in Oregon and California? No reason why he would not can be assigned. Hence if we admit the truth of the declaration, that we on the Pacific should correspond as freely with high as low postage, thereby adopting the theory that high postage does not operate as an embargo to correspondence in long distances, we must admit, also, the same would be true in all long distances; so that, by proving your statement true, you demolish your own theory which you have acted upon in this bill; besides, you prove your injustice, your partiality, and your disregard of the true policy of the Government, practiced for

over seventy years, to wit: a uniform operation of its laws.

But I repeat, it is not true; and to make it so appear, you must first prove that there is no end to our money, and that it is without value. I know it is not true of my people, and members have told me that it is not true of theirs, for I, as they, have known individual instances where correspondence has been forborne by reason of the high rates of postage which are now grinding us to the very earth on the Pacific. People on that side are restrained from writing their friends on this side, and vice versa. But if you reject this amendment, and pass the bill as it is, with three cents on our letters, and one on our papers, you may expect to receive vastly more money within the next five years, paid for postage on mailable matter between the two coasts, than you would at the present rates, or the rates proposed by the amendment. If you will give us the bill as it now stands, you will put the power into our hands of bringing to our coast, through the agency of correspondence, multitudes of our friends. You will enable us to people the coast; but if you adopt this amendment, you diminish our power for this purpose by three fourths. Pass the bill as it is, and you will have consummated a measure, in comparison to which, for its benefits to our coast, all other measures heretofore passed dwindle into insignificance; but if you adopt this amendment, you will have virtually read us out of the pale of the nation, and placed the discriminating hand of unkindness upon

us, beneath which we will toil on with submission, but annually send up to these Halls the indignant representations of an aggrieved people, till the enlightened reflection of a generous nation shall come to our aid and restore us to that station of equality from which this amendment seeks to remove us.

I have now, Mr. Chairman, examined the several reasons, put forth in and out of this Hall, in support of the amendment, whose fate here will, in a few minutes, tell for weal or for woe on the people I represent. I have done my whole duty in the premises; I have appealed to the sympathy of the nation through her representatives here; I have addressed myself to their understanding both publicly and privately. My cause is before you, gentlemen, and whatever may be your decision I shall submit, as it becomes the law-abiding character of an American citizen. But this measure is of such moment to us, I cannot close without reminding you that, on the escutcheon of a great nation, generosity to the weak shows to as good advantage, and is quite as apt to draw down the applause of the world, as rigid exactions, which, though they might be just, would nevertheless be ruinous. This said, I will, with the consent of the committee, withdraw my amendment, and suffer the vote to be taken on the merits at once.

NOTE.—The amendment having been withdrawn, the vote was then taken on Mr. POTTER's amendment, and it was rejected, and the bill subsequently passed the House without further amendment.

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